# The Orthodox Herald

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**Volume 48, No. 8 ISSUE 571** **DECEMBER 1999**

## GOD IS WITH US!

We can receive no greater assurance than those we receive from the words sung over and over again during the Christmas Eve Compline. "God is with us; take heed, O ye people, and submit, for God is with us!" These words are sung over and over again. "Zname Boh razumetj yazetse, e pokarayte sa, yako zname Boh." Beautiful music has been written for these words and some wonderful choirs have sung: "Yako zname Boh" while the deacon or priest is chanting the verses. We love this hymn and sing it often even in the "off" season.

In liturgical books, this hymn is referred to as the Hymn of Prophet Isaiah as it is based on the 8th and 9th chapter of the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah made a prophecy when Ahaz, the king of Judah, showed a lack of faith in the promise which God had made to David, through the prophet Nathan, that his kingdom would remain strong forever. Ahaz, however, put greater hope in human power than in the divine protection of the chosen people. He really hedged his bets trying to combine the two, thinking: "what harm is there in asking for help from another ruler?" Isaiah wrote that human power would fail but the Lord God would conquer through His "Emmanuel." Emmanuel is a Hebrew word for the Messiah which means "God is with us – Zname Boh" (Matt 1:23).

God with us!

**GOD** with us. All-powerful, all-knowing, unbound by time, so that our limited minds cannot grasp His fullness.

God **WITH** us. Not over or away, not like a distant judge or absentee landlord. He is beside us. A constant companion.

God with **US**. Failing, ungrateful, self-seeking, confused, undeserving humankind.

This is an astounding concept. Even at Christmas we give little thought to the idea that God is among us. We isolate God's nearness to a baby born two centuries ago and half a world away.

Was God only with us for 33 short years? Or did the brief life of Jesus reveal in a

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# Christ is born! Glorify Him!

## THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

St. John Chrysostom, who lived from 347 to 407, was given the agnomen "The Golden-Mouth" because of his preaching. He was one of the four great Greek doctors of the church. In his preaching, he expounds books of the Old and New Testament, particularly St. Paul's epistles. His aim was to expound the Bible in such a way that his hearers, ordinary people, might know and understand its teaching and its practical application. When we read his works we find that they are as relevant to the 20th century as they were in the 4th century. St. John's Divine Liturgy is served in the Church every Sunday except for ten Sundays. We marvel at the abundance of Biblical references in this service. We offer part of his sermon on the Nativity of Christ – note his familiarity with the Bible!

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I behold a new and wondrous mystery. My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting loudly a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voices in harmony. The Cherubims hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise his holy Feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in the place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of Justice.

And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed, He had the power. He descended, he redeemed; all things move in obedience to God. This day He Who is – is Born and He Who is becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is

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## YOU AND THE CHURCH

We make the church. God has placed the work in our hands. The history of the church is the indicator of how close or far off people have walked with God. How are you assisting in making your church? Your attitude, your participation in its activities, your support, your interest in its missionary programs, have a definite bearing on its success or failure. Your church in your community is what you are helping to make it. Are you pleased with the conditions of your church? What have you done in the past to better your church?

We come by our churches nowadays too cheaply. They do not cost us much. We do not put enough into them. Some do not put anything into them. And so in time their faith in the church shrivels. But Jesus loved the church, and gave Himself for it. He got the church at the cost of His life! And the gates and legions of every sort of hell have not prevailed against it.

One can easily see why for many the church is a puny and weak thing. Their faith is easily shattered. Someone may say something against them. Out they go! Or the pastor has some views they do not share. Off they go! Turn from people like those and to Jesus Christ. He brought the church into being at the cost of His life. He gave it a total life investment and support of deeds, of acts. How much will we give?

## "CAROL" - KOLJADA

Nove radost stala, Jaka ne byvala,
Zvizda jasna nad vertepom. Svitu vozsijala.

Kol' Christos rodilsja, Z Divy voplotilsja,
Jak celovik, pelenami, Uboho povilsja.

Anhely spivajut, Slava vosklicajut;
Na nebesach i na zemli, Radost vovsviscajut.

There was great rejoicing, On this Christmas morning,
O'er the manger, softly glowing, The bright star was shining.

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## CHRONOLOGY

DECEMBER 1999

DIED: Fr. Nicholas Semkoff in Chicago, IL.

CONFERENCE of Russian Orthodox Youth will be held in Nyack, NY from December 23-28. For info and registration call (914) 358-3878 or write 40 N. Greenbush Rd., West Nyack, NY 10994.

ROMANIA has decided not to make the Orthodox Church a state or preferred church.

A CHRISTMAS SALE at Regina Press, offering at least 50% off the books, has been extended to January 25 for **Orthodox Herald** readers. Call 1-800-636-2470 or write PO Box 5288, Salisbury, MA 01952 for a catalog or info. Orthodox books, videos, cassettes and CD roms are offered.

A BOOK OF COMMEMORATION in the English language, hardbound and containing the Moleben and Panahida Services and pages for the lists of names to be commemorated, is now available from Holy Trinity Bookstore, PO Box 36, Jordanville, NY 13361-0036. Send $11.50. Every family should have this permanent record of relatives.

DEADLINE NEARS. Churches in Russia have until December 31 to register their charter. Without registration from the Justice Ministry, the parish cannot legally own property, have employees or open a bank account.

START THE NEW MILLENNIUM by subscribing for **The Orthodox Herald** for friends. How about a packet for distributing to your parish members, "Sunday School" or Bible Study group? For info write to The Orthodox Herald or call 570-256-7232.

THE BLACK SEA ECOLOGICAL CONFERENCE will be held permanently in Halki, Turkey. Patriarch Bartholomew is very much interested in ecological problems, especially pollution of the Black Sea.

A CROSS of plywood and fiberglass, measuring 40 by 24 feet and weighing over one ton, has been constructed to mark the site of the first Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska, located at Nushagak. The church was built in 1841 and was destroyed by fire. Most of the parish members now live in Dillingham. Because of the terrain and size of the cross, there is difficulty in placing the Cross.

THE CLEVELAND AREA ORTHODOX CHURCHES are to be commended for planning a cooperative schedule of activities. They will place activities from other parishes in their church bulletins, have programs so that children will meet Orthodox children from other parishes, celebrate the "Name-Days" of parishes, etc. This is a multi-jurisdictional effort.

THE INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES is helping people in need from Bosnia, to Mexico, to Russian, and other countries. They publish a News and Needs leaflet, which gives details about their work. For info or to send donation, write: IOCC, PO Box 630225, Baltimore, MD 21263-0225 or call (410) 243-9820.

CALL FOR PAPAL APOLOGY has been put forth by the Greek Orthodox Church in Greece before the pontiff can make a visit. "If the pope wants to visit, he must show a sign of 'humility and repentance' for what some Orthodox consider a long history of Vatican-sponsored aggression and arrogance.

ORTHODOX PEOPLE TOGETHER is constructing a Web page and E-mail address to take over the function of the OPT Newsletter, which was printed from 1988 to 1996. Contributors are asked to send news, articles, etc. to www.OrthodoxPeopleTogether.org or the E-mail address OPTAmerica@aol.com.

KUDOS to Fr. Feodor Kovalchuk of Youngstown, OH for putting out One Church for over 50 years.

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS on December 25 is Juneau, AK the only parish in Alaska to do this.

STATISTICS as of October 1999 show that the Antiochian Archdiocese has 320 priests, 144 deacons, 18 seminarians, 220 parishes and missions.

ETHNIC CHRISTMAS TREES from countries including Ukraine, Russia, Serbia, Egypt, Belarus, Greece, Romania and Slovakia among many others are on display from Nov. 19 to January 3 at the Museum of Science and Industry, 57th Street and South Lake Shore Dr. in Chicago. Admission is free on Thursday. For info call (773) 684-1414.

BEESWAX CANDLES, sacramental altar wine and other products are available from St. Zosima's Church Supply, 1050 Route 6, Mahopac, NY 10541 or call (914) 628-2437 for info about these and other products.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH is either merging or closing churches because of the shortage of priests. Still 10% of the parishes do not have a resident priest. There are 325 fewer seminaries and 39,942 fewer seminarians since 1962. There are also 82,264 fewer nuns and one-third are retired.

HANDCRAFTED WOODEN CROSSES are available from Gregg Mohler, 750 Miller's Run Rd., McDonald, PA 15057. Call (412) 221-3072 for info and to order. Beautiful gift for Christmas.

PLAN NOW for attendance at the Eagle Rock Institute in Alaska and a pilgrimage to Kodiak for the anniversary of St. Herman, if desired. August 2000 is the date.

NOW CONFIRMED by Switzerland's Chronobiology and Sleep Laboratory that wearing socks and/or mittens to bed induces sleep if one suffers from cold feet or hands.

PRAYERS BEING OFFERED for unity of the Orthodox Churches in America. The Orthodox Christian Laity, PO Box 831283, Richardson, TX 75083-1283 phone (617) 277-3262 has prepared prayers to be said each week especially on Tuesdays for unity. The sheet of the three prayers can be obtained from the above address.

## •God Is With Us

direct, dramatic way that God is with us? If we were to have an acute awareness every day that God is alongside us – how would it affect how we live? How would it change how we feel, how we act? Might we be more aware of wonder, and grace and would we see it all around us? Our own misfortunes would still hurt, but they would be easier to bear.

If we were aware of the care surrounding us, how could we fail to hope? If we were aware of the peace enfolding us, how could we fail to rejoice? Yes, everything might be different if only we acknowledge that God is with us, here and now.

The message of Christmas is "Christ is born! God is with us!

## •The Nativity of Christ

His. Not yet by any loss of divinity became He man, through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh. His nature, because of impassibility, remaining unchanged.

When He was born the Jews denied His extraordinary Birth; the Pharisees began to interpret falsely the Sacred writings; the Scribes spoke in contradiction of that which they read. Herod sought Him out Who was born, not that he might adore, but to put Him to death. Today all things proclaim the opposite. **For they have not been**, that I may speak with the psalmist, **hidden from their children, in another generation** (Ps 127:4). And so the kings have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him Angels, nor Archangels, nor Thrones, nor Dominations, nor Powers, nor Principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path He has come forth from a spotless womb.

## •"Carol" - Koljada

Christ was born in glory, Of the Virgin Mary,
Let us humbly, like the shepherds, Kneel in adoration.

Angels softly singing, Glory, Praise, proclaiming:
From the heavens to the manger, Praising the Savior.

* * * * * *

Spiritual reading is to prayer what oil is to a lamp.

ST. JOSEPH

At this time there are many sources offering "icons." Among these we find several of St. Joseph with the Christ Child. How is St. Joseph remembered and honored in the Orthodox Church? As the protector of both the Mother of God and the Christ-Child. His role is an important one.

He is mentioned in the New Testament in the narratives about Jesus' infancy. See Matthew 1:1-25; 2:13-23; 13-55, and Luke 1:26-33; 2:1-7, 16, 33, 43. In these verses he is said to be a pious Jew of Davidic descent and a carpenter.

St. Joseph is also written about in an apocryphal book "The Protevangelium of James". Here he is said to be very old when he was betrothed to Mary. It is believed that the special veneration of St. Joseph seems to have originated in the East where the "History of Joseph the Carpenter" enjoyed great popularity from the 4th to the 7th centuries.

He is commemorated on the Sunday after Christmas or on December 26.

HOW DID YOU DO?

In September under Bible Study we had a few paragraphs challenging you to find the hidden names of the Bible. People found sixteen easily but the seventeenth evaded them. The names of the 17 books are in bold print.

I once made a re***mark*** about the hidden books of the Bible. It was a lu***lu, ke***pt people loo***king s***o hard for f***acts***, and for others it was a ***revelation.*** Some were in a ***jam***, ***es***pecially since the names of the books are not capitalized, but the t***ruth*** finally struck home to ***numbers*** of readers. To others, it was a real ***job***. We want it to be ***a mos***t fascinating few moments for you. Y***es***, ***ther***e will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require ***judges*** to help them. I will quickly admi***t it us***ually takes a minister to find one of the 17, and there will be loud ***lamentations*** when it is found. A little lady says s***he brews*** a cup of tea so she can concentrate better. See how well you can com***pete. R***elax now, for there really are names of 17 books of the Bible in these sentences.

COMPARISON

We hear that he is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (he can be everywhere at the same time). He is said to know all our needs and gives us the gifts we need and want. He knows when we are good or bad and rewards good and punishes evil. He has many helpers. Are we writing about God – no – it's Santa Claus, the fictional being that has become the god of Christmas to many. How strikingly parallel is this description of God to the nature of Santa Claus.

There appears to be confusion in many minds as a lot of people in our culture today sadly have a "Santa Claus" understanding of God. Many say they believe in God – but what God? A God who will not keep them out of heaven because they think they are basically good? A God who may warn of heaven or hell but who will accept all men in one way or another in the end anyway?

Do you have them confused?

* * * * * *

Orthodox believe that both body and soul will be saved, matter and spirit together. So we believe that mind and body should join in worship. Spirit and matter should unite in praising God. In Orthodox services this is put into practice. Decorations of flowers stand beside icons made of wood and the colors of the earth. Candles of brown beeswax glow beside golden olive oil in glass vigil lamps. Incense made from resin and tree sap sends up its smoke from metal incense burners. Human beings, wearing cotton and linen and wool from sheep, bow or make the sign of the cross, pray silently or raise their voices in praise. Offerings of bread and wine, full of sunshine and the goodness of the earth, are made. All of God's goodness is offered up to God. "Thine own of thine own we offer to Thee."

## •Kitchen Corner

of family warmth. The ceremony of making the traditional Christmas Eve dishes has the ability to evoke these feelings, allowing our minds to travel back to the past with its memories and to the future with its hopes and dreams.

Carpathian Sauerkraut

1 large can or 1 lb. sauerkraut
1 Tbls. oil
1 small onion, chopped
1 small potato, raw, grated
pepper to taste
1 Tbls. flour

Drain sauerkraut. Rinse in cold water. Drain. Place in pan and add water to cover and allow to simmer one hour. Drain and reserve liquid. Add oil to same pot. Add chopped onions and cook until tender. Blend in flour and mix constantly until medium brown. Add sauerkraut, grated potato and 1/2 cup of the reserved liquid. Season to taste and simmer for about 10 minutes. Good reheated.

## IN HIM NEW LIFE BEGINS!

As winter strengthens its hold upon our land, while nature rests under its mantle of snow, it is good to think about life that will never die – the life that has been given to us, as well as to all who thirsts for it, by Jesus the Messiah.

In Colossians 1:12-18, Paul of Tarsus guides our meditation on this theme as he prays that we might be: "Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." Yes, indeed the days are becoming short as we approach the winter solstice. What better time to think about the kingdom of Light which has been opened to us by the coming of the Christ-Child!

In a time when the shadows become longer and deeper, what comfort it is to affirm together with St. Paul that God the Father "has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins!"

And lest we think that all this is but a dream from which we shall awaken just as lost and desperate as when we fell asleep, St. Paul declares with all convictions and authority:

> "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creations, for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Thus, in receiving and following Jesus we have this firm assurance: our efforts ought not to consist of trying to push out shadows, depression, sadness. Instead we must rest in Christ. Note that resting in Him takes **effort.** It is not a passive, but an active resting!

In Him **everything** ultimately plays its appropriate role in helping us attain our place in the magnificent and panoramic design of the Master-Painter, God. Finally, we shall be full of strength, of creativity, of love, of peace and of tranquility forever. This is His promise to us in this time of waiting for the appearing of the new-born Child.

Fr. Ihor George Kutash, Ph.D

## NEW SAINT

On 15 December 1996 Peter Mogila was recognized as a saint. He was born in 1596 to a family of Moldavian princes who entered into the service of the King of Poland. After a brief service in the military, he was ordained a priest in a monastery in Kiev. Kiev was occupied by Poland at this time. He battled the consequences of the Union of Brest-Litovsk, which, in 1596 the year of his birth, divided the church of Kiev into two parts – the Orthodox and those in union with Rome – the Uniates.

St. Metropolitan Peter was disturbed by the split. He decided that the best way to mitigate the situation was to restore the authority of the clergy and to improve their education. He established an Orthodox school of theology in Kiev in 1631 and later upgraded it to an academy on the model of Jesuit colleges in Poland. In his endeavor to upgrade knowledge about the Church, he authored a Catechism which became popular among Orthodox and served as a model for other publications of doctrinoal and catechetical nature.

In 1632, thanks to St. Peter's efforts, the Orthodox Church was legalized in the Kingdom of Poland - Lithuania. It had been forbidden to exist since 1596, the year when the Unia was established. By being legalized an official hierarchy was necessary. Because of his efforts, Metropolitan Peter was named head. One of his first efforts was to restore many churches and monasteries which had been taken by the Uniates in the previous 36 years.

At the service of canonization, St. Peter Mogila was called "a defender of Orthodoxy, an educator of the people, a philosopher, a famous preacher and a man of great personal piety. He encouraged the renewal of spiritual life and theological education in Malorus (in the present Ukraine) and beyond, opening the first school of higher education in Eastern Europe."

## FUNDS

ALASKA FUND: Walter Booriakin, Fr. Spero Page, **Libby Penzenik**.
MISSION FUND: Barbara Ondo, William Kuzemchak, Andrew Huzinec.
ALASKA AND MISSION FUNDS: **John Russian**, Serjey Taptykoff, Ethel Watlock, John Yanowsky, William Hudak.

* * * * * *

To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.

## Dabs of Thoughts

We give special greetings during the Christmas season. "Christ is Born!" is answered by "Glorify Him!"

How language does change. The greeting "Merry Christmas" originally meant "blessed, peaceful or pleasant" not "joyful, hilarious, or happy" as merry means today. The original meaning expressed spiritual joys rather than earthly happiness. The well-known carol "God rest you merry, gentlemen" is an excellent example of the original meaning of merry. The position of the comma clearly shows the true meaning (that the word is not an adjective describing "gentlemen"). Therefore, it is not "God rest you, joyful gentlemen," but "God rest you peacefully, gentlemen."

The Nativity Fast (Advent) is partly a time of joy in expectation of the Saviour's Nativity and partly a season of mourning and penance. With this spirit of humble penance we should prepare ourselves for a worthy and fruitful celebration of the great Feast of the Nativity.

We see no shadows in icons because the source of light is from within and not from outside the person depicted.

An icon is kissed prior to Holy Communion to show that we believe in the veneration of icons and are not inconoclasts.

Who would ever predict that the day would come when a priest must bring attention to the wearing of proper clothes to church? At one time, mama made sure everyone was decently dressed. Clothes might be **old but clean and pressed** and decent.

There is no liturgical season in preparation for Christmas. However, a fast is observed.

If you don't like the salesman, you don't buy the product.

Some parishes tell a priest how long he can preach – do they have homilophobia?

While our heavenly Father does not promise a comfortable journey, He does guarantee a safe landing.



## EDITORS' NOTES

Last month we wrote that in many arishes we can say "bye bye" to private onfession. This was to amplify the statenent that there are too many differences n practices among parishes even in the acraments. We were deluged with letters. ome of the practices or lack of them trouled many. Among them are: the failure to enerate the icon on the central table etrapod) before partaking of Holy Communion; not being offered zapivka or ip of wine and water and a piece of rosphora following Holy Communion.

Perhaps, the biggest confusion was conerning fasting before Holy Communion. t ranged from not even brushing of teeth o a light breakfast of coffee and toast. 'asting from midnight is still followed by nany although they are often told a few ours will do. Some drink water while oths don't take medication. Where has the tandard of nothing by mouth after midight gone? Even smoking was forbidden. Vhen has the rule changed? By whose uthority?

Choir Directors and Chanters are espeially concerned by the changes in the )ivine services. Most of them are voluneers as parishes are unable to carry the xpense of a full-time psalomschick. These eople usually buy books at their own xpense. Study them in preparation for a ervice only to find that there is considerble difference between book and practice.

As people are more mobile and less ttached to their churches, they worship n other churches sometimes not even in heir jurisdiction. Many of them admit to oming a few minutes late and standing in he back of the church or in the choir loft ecause they "don't know how things are one here."

The Nativity Fast is here. It seems to be artly a time of joy in expectation of the aviour's Nativity and partly a season of nourning and humble penance as we are reparing ourselves for a worthy and ruitful celebration of the Great Feast Day f the Nativity.

We want to apologize to all whose title has not appeared on their address label. We have experienced a glitch between two computers and can't seem to find a way to correct the problem.

*The Stroyens*

## WINTER'S GRACE

I recently received a call from a friend I had not talked to for years. He and his family were parishioners at my first parish, almost 50 years ago. We spoke of the Sunday School we started, people we knew and what had happened to them and about his life and that of his family since we had spoken last. We both agreed the little visit by phone was very enjoyable. Our past is so personal to all of us that we like to revisit it often in memory and conversation.

Scripture encourages us to reflect on the years gone by and realize that God was there with us. In Deuteronomy 32:7 we are told to "Remember the days of old. Consider the years of many generations." At the time of our involvement we may have been unaware of God's presence, but now looking back it has become more clear. Have you been deeply depressed by the end of a certain love relationship only to later meet the one who became your spouse? God was directing you. Maybe you didn't get the job you simply "had to have," but now you can look back and understand that it was not meant for you. Perhaps you got a better one.

Since God has been with us in years gone by, we must renew our faith that God will be with us in the years ahead.

## PRESS FUND

Christ is Born! Glorify Him! There are so many ways in which we can glorify Christ. Certainly one way is to spread His teachings. With your help we are doing this. Spasebo/Thank You for your help. Elizabeth Zbegner, John Russian, Irene Allen, **Allen Lucas,** David Wargo, Dora Daley, Walter Booriakin, Ann O'Brien, Ethel Watlock, **Anna Dorozynski,** Mary Adam, Stella Kadingo, Mary Kochmaruk, Ann Plefka, Sophia Coggins, John Good, William Hudak, Eva Harris. Georgette Sarosi for health of Chester Hare and prayers in memory of **Fr. Dimitri Voytilla.** Theodore Demchak in memory of George and Mary Demchak. **Tim and Mary Goomas** in memory of Trevor, Andrew, and Joelle and in thanksgiving for **The Orthodox Herald**. **Steve and Lenora Evancho** prayers for health of Sulin, Uhrin and Evancho families and for Claudia Sulin, Father Basil and Matushka Nina Stroyen.




The Christmas Eve supper is usually thought of as a family event and is celebrated, if possible, in the company of those dearest to us. Customs may vary from family to family but one certainty is that this is a special, meatless, nondairy, twelve-course meal. How deeply the foods and customs have survived shows how deeply they were rooted in the hearts of our ancestors. Now in this day of revolutionary social change and technical discoveries, the keeping of these customs respects and values these echoes of times gone by. Perhaps they are naive, but there is a spark of yearning for happiness and peace in them.

The meal starts with the head of the family sharing either a prosphora, wafer or kutia with those present. Kutia, a dish of grain and sweetener like honey, is usually associated with the memorial service. Here it is made the same but has poppy seed added. Carrying out the awareness of those gone on, an empty place is set at the table in belief that the souls of ancestors will come to celebrate with the family. A little bit of food from every course is placed on the plate and it was considered a terrible sin if the plate was removed before Christmas morning. One reader wrote me that in its concern for the souls before sitting down at the table or bench they would blow on the chair or bench in order not to sit on a soul.

In Orthodox homes, the emphasis is on the Christmas Eve supper. The meal for Christmas is hardly mentioned, for it is the same as any meal prepared for a special Holy Day or festive occasion. The leftovers from the previous evening meal are placed on the menu, and what could be better than the reheated sauerkraut with pork roast or duck?

In the olden days, our ancestors observed their feasts for many reasons, not the least of these was as an example to atheists and heretics. Today the giant Christmas Eve suppers belong to the irretrievable past for many. We do not have the appetites of our ancestors and often we celebrate alone or with one or two others. But celebrate we must for the atmosphere

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## HUMANITY AND DIVINITY

This (Christmas night) bestowed peace on the whole world – let no one threaten;

this is the night of the most Gentle One – let no one be cruel;

this is the night of the most Humble One – let no one be proud.

Now is the day of joy – let us not seek revenge;

now is the day of good will – let us not be mean;

this is the day of peace – let us not be conquered by anger.

Today the Bountiful One impoverished Himself for our sake; so, the rich one should invite the poor to his table.

Today we received a gift, for which we did not ask; so, let us give alms to those who implore us and beg.

Today, this present day, cast opens the heavenly door to our prayer; so, let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness.

Now the Divine Being took upon Himself the seal of humanity, in order for humanity to be decorated by the seal of Divinity.

St. Issac of Syria

* * * * * *

"God so loved the world" (John 3:16). See! There is nothing except the holy and blessed love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit towards a sinful and despairing mankind:

The love of the Father crucifying;

The love of the Son crucified;

The love of the Spirit triumphing by the power of the Cross.

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow

## Home Bible Reading Schedule

DECEMBER 1999

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 Tim 5:22-6:11 | 17 | Heb 7:18-25 |
| 2 | 1 Tim 6:17-21 | 18 | Gal 3:8-12 |
| 3 | 2 Tim 1:1-2, 8-18 | **19** | **Heb 11:9-10, 17-23** |
| 4 | Gal 3:23-29 | 20 | Heb 8:7-13 |
| **5** | **Eph 6:10-17** | 21 | Heb 9:8-10, 15-23 |
| 6 | Heb 13:17-21 | 22 | Heb 10:1-18 |
| 7 | 2 Tim 3:16-4:4 | 23 | Heb 10:35-11:7 |
| 8 | 2 Tim 4:9-22 | 24 | Heb 1:1-12 |
| 9 | Gal 4:22-31 | 25 | Gal 4:4-7 |
| 10 | Titus 1:15-2:10 | **26** | **Heb 2:11-18** |
| 11 | Eph 1:16-23 | 27 | Acts 6:8-15, 17:1-5 |
| **12** | **Heb 13:17-21** | 28 | Heb 12:25-26, 13:22-25 |
| 13 | Heb 3:5-11, 17-19 | 29 | James 1:1-18 |
| 14 | Heb 4:1-13 | 30 | James 1:19-27 |
| 15 | Heb 5:11-6:8 | 31 | James 2:1-13 |
| 16 | Heb 7:1-6 | | |

## [illegible]E BIBLE STUDY

We [illegible] the name of Melchizedek in th[illegible] church services. Who is he? [illegible]an be gleaned from both the Ol[illegible]w Testaments. In Hebrews 7:21 we read "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

In the old Testament, he is called the "king of Salem (Jerusalem)" and "priest of God Most High." (Gen. 14:18). In the book of Psalms he is named as the representative priest in whose succession the Davidic king is ordained. (Psalm 110:4). He seems to be a supernatural figure whose origins and eternal life seem to foreshadow the divinity of Jesus "without father or mother or genealogy ... (who) has neither beginning of days nor end of life. (Hebrews 7:3)

Melchisedek brought bread and wine to Abraham. According to the words of St. Paul, Melchisedek foreshadows Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Abraham was a wonderful and godly peasant, but Melchisedek was both priest and king, as is our Lord Himself. Melchisedek offered Abraham bread and wine, and the Lord offers the whole of the human race His Body and Blood.

Abraham bowed down to Melchisedek and gave him tribute willingly. Abraham's true descendents, the Christians, bow down to the Lord and offer Him willing sacrifice in gratitude for His gift, the gift of His Body and Blood upon the Cross. For who shall declare His generation – and this refers to Christ as much as Melchisedek: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). This is the way the Lord spoke to the Jews. How did He see it? In his spirit. God disclosed it to him, and he saw the prefiguration of Christ, the glorious Melchisedek, king, priest and servant of the most high.

## CONFUSION

In the Bible mention is made of the brothers of Jesus. However, we are taught that Mary had no other children. How can we straighten out this confusion?

St. Epiphanios, Bishop of Salamis, who lived from 315-403, developed at length and defended what later became the teaching of the Church that Mary was the Ever-Virgin. She had no other children. The persons mentioned as Christ's brothers were the children of Joseph in a previous marriage.

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To love a person means to see him as God intended him to be.

Fydor Dostoevsky